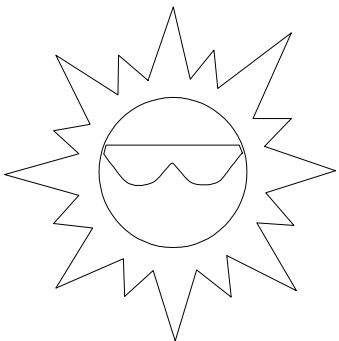




## Heat Stress Disorders



Heat and humidity can be dangerous during hurricane clean-up work. People need more water when doing physical labor; however, water can be in short supply or not available because of storm damage. Air conditioning will be unavailable if electricity is off. Shade may be scarce because trees are down and roofs are damaged. People need to be aware of the risks of heat stroke.

Heat disorders generally are caused by the body's inability to shed excess heat. The body is cooled by losing heat through the skin and by perspiration. When heat gain exceeds the amount the body can remove, the body's inner temperature begins to rise, and heat-related illness may develop.

Heat disorders share one common feature: the individual has been overexposed to heat, or overexercised for his age and physical condition on a hot day. The severity of heat disorders tends to increase with age; heat cramps in a 17-year-old may be heat exhaustion in someone 40, and heat stroke in a person over 60.

Sunburn can significantly retard the skin's ability to shed excess heat. Elderly persons, small children, chronic invalids, those on certain medications or drugs and persons with weight and alcohol problems are particularly susceptible to heat reactions.

### Heat Disorder Symptoms

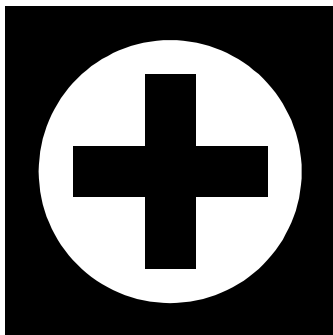
This document is IFAS  
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Adapted by UF/IFAS from:  
*Document DH-050,*  
*IFAS Disaster Handbook for*  
*Extension Agents*  
(developed by the  
Cooperative Extension  
Service for the benefit of  
Florida's citizens)

- Sunburn—Redness and pain. In severe cases, swelling of skin, blisters, fever, headaches.
- Heat cramps—Painful spasms, usually muscles of legs, and possibly abdomen. Heavy sweating.
- Heat exhaustion—Heavy sweating, weakness, skin cold, pale and clammy. Pulse thready. Normal temperature possible. Fainting and vomiting.
- Heat stroke (or sunstroke)—High body temperature (106°F or higher). Hot dry skin. Rapid and strong pulse. Possible unconsciousness.

## Safety Tips

- Slow down. Schedule strenuous work for the coolest time of day. Individuals at risk should stay in the coolest available place, not necessarily indoors.
- Dress lightly. Lightweight, light-colored clothing reflects heat and sunlight, and helps your body maintain normal temperatures. However, dress for safety if using tools or removing heavy debris. Wear close-fitting clothing and wear shoes to prevent injury.
- Eat lightly. Foods, such as proteins, that increase metabolism also increase body heat and water loss.
- Drink water. Your body needs water to keep cool. Drink plenty of fluids even if you don't feel thirsty.



NOTE: Persons who have epilepsy, heart, kidney or liver disease, are on fluid-restricted diets, or have a problem with fluid retention should consult a physician if possible before increasing fluid consumption.

- Do not drink alcoholic beverages.
- Do not take salt tablets without a doctor's permission. Persons on salt restrictive diets should consult a physician before increasing their salt intake.
- Consult your doctor about your current medications. Certain prescribed medications increase heat and ultraviolet sensitivity.
- Spend time in air-conditioned places. Try to locate and spend time in buildings where the power and air conditioning are functioning. Spending some time each day in an air-conditioned environment will give some protection. This is especially important for the elderly.
- Don't get too much sun. Sunburn makes reducing body temperature more difficult.

## First Aid

- Apply ointments for sunburns if blisters appear and do not break. If breaking occurs, apply dry sterile dressing. Serious cases should be seen by a physician.
- Firm pressure on cramping muscles or gentle massage will help relieve spasms. Give sips of water. If nausea occurs, discontinue water.

- Get the victim out of the sun. Lay down and loosen clothing. Apply cool, wet cloths. Fan or move victim to air-conditioned room, if possible. Give sips of water. If nausea occurs, discontinue water. If vomiting continues, seek immediate medical attention.
- Move the victim to a cooler environment. Reduce body temperature with cold bath or sponging. Use extreme caution. Remove clothing, use fans and air conditioners. If body temperature rises again, repeat the process. Do not give fluids.
- Heat stroke is a severe medical emergency. Summon emergency medical assistance or get the victim to a hospital immediately. Delay can be fatal.